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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, S/CRS, SE WILLIAMSON, NSC FOR
BPITTMAN AND CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNAMID DEPLOYMENT GETS A LIFT

REF: KHARTOUM 883

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Just when it seemed like those in charge of UNAMID deployment were all out for summer break and all meaningful work would accordingly have to wait until fall, the contingent-owned equipment for the Chinese engineers in Nyala reached its destination at long last, allowing for arrival of the main Chinese party by July 11. This is no small feat and comes at a time when things seem more bleak than ever for the peacekeeping operation: PAE's demobilization from Darfur, fickle troop contributors, and spiking incidents of banditry and other crime ahead of the rainy season and in conjunction with unrest in eastern Chad. The June 18-21 visit of incoming Assistant-Secretary-General for the Department of Field Support Susanna Malcorra could also contribute to the slight "momentum," and a reinvigorated push instigated by UNAMID police to get convoys moving from El Obeid are other positive steps for the still quite overwhelmed Mission. END SUMMARY.

CHINESE ENGINEERS EXPECTED JULY 1

¶2. (SBU) New Chief of Planning for the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) COL Noddy Stafford (who replaced COL Murdo Urquhart) told FieldOff June 17 that the advance party of Chinese engineers in Nyala finally received their contingent-owned equipment (CoE) after close to an eight-month delay. Because the shipment included fasteners necessary for the engineers' work on accommodations, they are able to begin construction of two additional buildings, allowing for the arrival of the main party of the Chinese by July 1, ahead of UNAMID's original deployment schedule [NOTE: The Planning Chief remarked that it would be a long haul for the advance elements of the Chinese contingent despite the "early" arrival of the main party. The advance party's deployment clock does not begin until the party is complete, leaving them with another 18 months in Darfur. END NOTE].

¶3. (SBU) In other CoE updates, the Planning Chief noted that UNAMID would begin moving 11 containers from Zam Zam to Kulbus in violent West Darfur on June 18 in preparation for the deployment of the advance elements of the second Ethiopian battalion, an element that would consist of some engineers. The CoE in these containers would be transported by 14 runs of an Mi-26 heavy transport helicopter and would include 14 vehicles. The Planning Chief, who had accompanied UNAMID Force Commander Agwai on a June 13 visit to Addis Ababa, said the Ethiopian MoD was still paranoid about security for its troops deploying in Sector West and for its assets, and was requesting an airlift of its four APCs. According to the Force Commander, the Government of Sudan (GoS) had agreed in principle to allow Ethiopia to fly its troops directly from Addis Ababa to El Geneina for onward Sector West deployment.

OTHER ENCOURAGING SIGNALS

¶4. (SBU) According to the Force Commander, further baby steps were taken in a June 16 monthly meeting in Khartoum between UNAMID

leadership (including FC Agwai, D/JSR for Operations and Management Medili, Director of Administration Yonis and Police Commissioner Fryer) and the GoS (MFA U/S Siddiq and his military/intelligence team). During this meeting the GoS officially accepted 0700-1900 operating hours at Darfur airports; agreed to accelerate the issuance of land; committed to working to release CoE; agreed to assist in convoy movement from Kordofan. GEN Agwai also affirmed GoS acceptance of the Thai and Nepalese contributions to UNAMID once the Ethiopian and Egyptian battalions had deployed.

¶6. (SBU) On convoy movement, the other half of the CoE coin, UNAMID is encouraged by the successful five-day movement of 20 trucks from El Obeid to Nyala, a convoy headed by UNAMID Police Commissioner Fryer. Despite only 101 km of tarmac roads, the water and fuel escort convoy made it to Nyala without incident and informed UNAMID's planning for future such convoys, which the Police Commissioner plans to push on a 72-hour basis. Fryer told Fieldoff the experience convinced him of the indispensability of local drivers and authorities (GoS police escorted the convoy from El Obeid to Babanusa, then from Babanusa to El Daein). He said it also impressed upon him the vulnerability of such convoys, which stretch almost two kilometers long on vast, deserted "roads" where hijackings would be very easy to execute. Nonetheless, UNAMID leadership is determined to make another run, again led by the enterprising Police Commissioner, this time on the El Obeid-Um Kadada-El Fasher route during the week of June 22.

REALITY CHECK

¶7. (SBU) Not all CoE and deployment news is so encouraging, however. The Planning Chief described difficulties with moving the CoE for the first Ethiopian battalion, noting that this CoE (which had

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arrived in country on April 21) was "lost on a conveyor belt somewhere between Port Sudan and El Obeid" and was not accordingly expected until at least October. He mentioned that there was ongoing discussion with the Ethiopian Ministry of Defense with regard to the deployment of the first Ethiopian infantry battalion: whether it would go to Muhajeria/Shaeiria or to Tulus/Edd Al Fursan in South Darfur.

¶8. (SBU) The Planning Chief pointed out that new battalions were arriving without the requisite training to operate APCs, noting that the much used Canadian APCs were particularly unfamiliar to troops and that they required a two-week training period for both drivers and gunners. To remedy this, the Chief suggested deploying drivers early for such training and instructing engineers in theatre to construct training areas for such instruction to take place so that troops could get on the ground and trained up from here.

¶9. (SBU) On the possibility of transferring Chinese and Pakistani platoons from the UN Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) to UNAMID, the Planning Chief reported that there would be a Chinese recce in the coming days. He confirmed the Pakistani refusal to transfer a platoon from UNMIS but noted its offer to provide its own platoon directly from Pakistan later this year. The Planning Chief noted that this contribution would end up being too little far too late.

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) Despite persistent obstacles and shortcomings to its deployment, UNAMID is not without some measured progress, and it is indeed encouraging to see movement on CoE issues in particular, since this issue is fundamental to the arrival of increased numbers of troops. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that some of these "accomplishments," especially the arrival of the Chinese CoE, were months in the making, largely due to factors that should never have been allowed to become the obstacles that they did (the Chinese CoE was delayed as a result of haggling by the UN over transport costs of \$1000 with local contractors). Until UNAMID learns to better pick its logistical battles, we may have to get used to such "successes" every eight months or so. Hopefully the visit of A/SYG Malcorra will continue this forward momentum and keep the spotlight on the unexciting but essential logistical issues that threaten to grind UNAMID deployment to a halt.

FERNANDEZ